

Lyme Disease Fact Sheet

What Is <i>Lyme Disease</i>?	Lyme Disease is a bacterial disease transmitted to people by deer ticks. Lyme disease cannot be transmitted from person to person. In the US, infected ticks are found in the northeast, north central and Pacific coastal states. It is most common in the spring and summer months. Lyme disease is rarely, if ever, fatal. It is the leading cause of vector borne illness in the country with about 15,000 case reported in the US each year.
What are the symptoms?	Within 1-2 weeks of being infected, most people will have a bulls-eye rash at the site where the tick was attached, fever, headache, and muscle or joint pain. Some people have a fever and flu-like symptoms without a rash. If the bacteria spreads people could experience other symptoms such as pain that moves from joint to joint, rashes on other parts of the body, or inflammation of the heart or nerves. If the disease is not treated some patients can get additional symptoms such as swelling and pain in joints or mental changes months after being infected.
How is <i>Lyme Disease</i> treated?	Most people can be successfully treated with antibiotics if diagnosed in the early stages. If the disease is diagnosed weeks or months later, the patient may require intravenous treatment of antibiotics for four weeks or longer.
How do people catch this disease?	Ticks become infected by feeding on small mammals, then transmit the bacteria to humans and other mammals. Lyme disease cannot be transmitted from person to person. Transmission of the bacteria from an infected tick most often occurs after a tick has been attached and feeding for 36 hours.
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	Lyme disease is not transmitted from person to person. If you are visiting an area that may have deer ticks, wear light colored clothing so ticks can be easily spotted and removed. Remove ticks promptly using a tweezer and clean the area with an antiseptic. Because the transmission of the bacteria is unlikely to occur in the first 36 hours of tick attachment, prompt removal of any attached ticks will help prevent infection. Wear long sleeved shirts and tuck pant legs into your socks. Using an insect repellant that contains DEET should also help reduce the risk of a tick attaching itself.